



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN AFFAIRS COMMISSION

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Alok Bhatt

Dear Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and esteemed members of the Education Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Alok Bhatt. I serve as Legislative Analyst for the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission (APAAC).

In fulfilling our charge to ensure that Asian Pacific Americans (APA) in Connecticut live free from discrimination, with equal access to education, APAAC writes in strong support of Raised Bill 381: An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study School Climate.

While APAAC supports the safety and progress of all students and schools in the State of Connecticut, we write with particular concerns around the impact of bullying on APA students. In November 2014, the White House established the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Bullying Intervention Task Force specifically to address this issue¹. This Task Force identifies several reasons for targeted bullying against APA students. Muslim, Sikh, Middle Eastern, and South Asian students are sometimes targeted for wearing traditional garb, such as turbans and hijabs. Islamophobia and incendiary attitudes towards peoples perceived as Muslim or Middle Eastern also severely impact these students².

APA students are also be bullied because of perceived 'foreignness', or Limited English Proficiency.

Although few local data exist to determine the severity of bullying against APA students in Connecticut, national statistics raise significant concerns. According to a 2010 *Indicators of School Crime and Safety* report, 11.1% of APA victims of bullying in school expressed that their race or ethnicity made them a target³.

No student should experience fear or intimidation in school. Schools represent forums for education and positive social development. Although no legislation can completely alter human behavior, particularly in children and young adults, policies and programs ought to be designed to cultivate the best school climate possible, for students

¹ <http://sites.ed.gov/aapi/aapi-bullying/>

² <http://www.nbcconnecticut.com/news/local/Terrorist-Educators-Try-Protecting-Muslim-Students-From-Bullying-371150811.html>

³ <http://www.apa.org/pi/oema/resources/ethnicity-health/asian-american/bullying-and-victimization.aspx>

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and staff.

APAAC hopes the Task Force proposed in Raised Bill 381 will find holistic means to create the best environments in Connecticut schools.

I thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Alok Bhatt
Legislative Analyst, APAAC

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